

this Senate, we extend our deepest sympathy and condolences to her husband Buck, her daughter Elizabeth, her daughter Tillie, and all of her extended family.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, it was with great sadness that I learned of the passing of Tillie Fowler, a great friend, dedicated public servant, and remarkable woman.

It is difficult to think about Florida politics without thinking about Tillie Fowler. She was a woman with strong values, political acumen and honor. I was lucky to have known her and, more importantly, Florida was lucky to have had her represent us in the U.S. House of Representatives.

She is an inspiration to Floridians and all Americans, and she will be greatly missed.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. ISAKSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ENHANCEMENT ACT OF 2005

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate crime that has occurred in our country.

Late last year, two gay men were attacked when attempting to leave a night club in Tampa, Florida. The men were repeatedly punched and kicked in the head by two assailants. Authorities in Florida have designated this case as a hate crime because the apparent motivation for the vicious attack was the sexual orientation of the two victims.

I believe that the Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

THE MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON ACT OF 2005

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, yesterday I introduced the Money Follows the Person Act of 2005, along with Senator HARKIN.

My job as a Senator is to help protect and defend the freedoms of all Americans. One of the most important freedoms we enjoy is the freedom to choose where we live. For example, many people overlook the importance of being

able to choose to live among family and friends and not among strangers.

All too often this basic freedom is denied to older Americans and Americans with disabilities. Currently, we are unnecessarily isolating people with disabilities from their communities, friends, families and loved ones by placing them in institutional care facilities. Many of these Americans should not be in a nursing home or institutional setting. A disabled person can often be better served and integrated into their community by living in community-based homes.

However, recent data indicates that 70 percent of Medicaid dollars are spent on institutional care and only 30 percent are spent on community services for the disabled. This is because Medicaid currently requires that States provide nursing home care for Americans with disabilities, but does not require the same for community-based services. Due to this inequity in Medicaid law many individuals with disabilities and older Americans are forced to live in isolated settings.

In order to preserve the freedoms of our friends and loved ones in the disabled community, we must do something to reverse this trend. It is my privilege today to join my distinguished colleague from Iowa as a co-sponsor of the Money Follows the Person Act of 2005. Under this legislation, Oregon's effort to help an individual move out of an institutional facility and into a community home would be 100 percent federally funded for one year. After that first year, the Federal Government would pay the state's normal Medicaid rate.

These incentives can help reintegrate countless older Americans and Americans with disabilities into a setting where they can be more active citizens. Americans everywhere realize the value of integrating persons with disabilities into their communities. It is unfair and unjust to needlessly isolate productive citizens from their communities, regardless of their condition. It is time we work to reintegrate disabled Americans back into our communities. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this important bill and to support the freedom of choice for Americans with disabilities.

THE "DECADE OF ROMA INCLUSION"

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, last month, the Prime Ministers of eight Central and Southern European countries met in Sofia, Bulgaria, for their first meeting in what has been dubbed "the Decade of Roma Inclusion." This initiative is designed to spur governments to undertake intensive engagement in the field of education, employment, health and housing with respect to Europe's largest, most impoverished and marginalized ethnic minority, the Roma. The Open Society Institute, the World Bank, the European Commission and the United Nations Development Program—all

supporters of this initiative—hope that this effort will result in meaningful improvements over the course of a 10-year period.

In December, a donors' conference pledged \$42 million for a Roma Education Fund. But the real goal is to get governments to give more help to their own people from their own budgets, as well as to make better use of the funds already available from organizations like the EU.

The fact is, Romani riots in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, in 2002 and in eastern Slovakia last year should be a wake up call for governments with significant Romani communities. These countries cannot afford to ignore the crushing impoverishment and crude bigotry that so many Roma face on a daily basis. The Decade of Romani Inclusion is all well and good, and I commend the governments that are participating in this initiative. But much more needs to be done to truly advance Romani integration. It must start with a message of tolerance and inclusion from the highest levels of government.

Unfortunately, too often the voices that are heard are those spreading crude stereotypes and inter-ethnic hatred. I am particularly alarmed by what appears to be an increase in anti-Roma statements in Bulgaria.

Last summer, the head of one of Bulgaria's leading trade unions, Konstantin Trenchev, broadly characterized all Roma as criminals—and then called for the establishment of vigilante guards to deal with them. More recently, Ognian Saparev, a Member of Parliament from the Bulgarian Socialist Party, dismissed the significance of reports that the Mayor of Pazardzhik has trafficked Romani girls for the benefit of visiting foreigner diplomats. Saparev reportedly claimed that the statutory rape of these girls shouldn't be considered a crime because Romani girls are "mature" at age 14. Significantly, Saparev also gained headlines last year for publishing an inflammatory article about Roma in which he argued they should be forced to live in ghettos.

Even worse statements have come from Russia. Yevgenii Urlashov, a city official in Yaroslavl, recently characterized all Roma as drug dealers and called for them to be deported. Not to be outdone, fellow municipal legislator, Sergei Krivnyuk, said, "residents are ready to start setting the Gypsies' houses on fire, and I want to head this process."

Although nongovernmental human rights groups have condemned this anti-Romani rhetoric, other leaders in Bulgaria and Russia have largely remained silent. But it is critical that public leaders, from all walks of life, speak out against such hate mongering.

Speaking on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Polish President Kwasniewski noted that "complete extermination

was also [intended] to be the fate of the Roma community." It will not do, 60 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, to stand by in silence while Roma are crudely caricatured as criminals, just as they were by the Nazis. And we must not stand by in silence when a member of Parliament dismisses the criminal act of trafficking of children, simply because they are Romani.

BELARUS—OUTPOST OF TYRANNY

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, over the course of the last few months, we have witnessed dramatic events in one of Europe's largest countries, Ukraine. The Orange Revolution has clearly shown that people power can bring about peaceful democratic change some thought was not possible in a former Soviet state. As a result, and with the support of the United States, Europe and international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe OSCE, Ukraine is on the path to freedom and democracy. Notwithstanding the formidable challenges that remain to overcome the legacy of the past, Ukraine now has a real chance at consolidating its democracy and further integrating into the Euro-Atlantic community.

Unfortunately, the news out of Belarus, Ukraine's neighboring fellow eastern Slavic country to the north stands in stark contrast to the encouraging news coming out of Ukraine. Secretary Rice, in her confirmation testimony, characterized Belarus, along with North Korea, Iran, Cuba, Burma, and Zimbabwe as an outpost of tyranny and asserted that America stands with oppressed people on every continent. Belarus, under Alexander Lukashenka's now 10-year repressive rule, has the worst human rights record of any country in Europe. Lukashenka's regime has increasingly violated human rights and freedoms and has made a mockery of commitments that Belarus freely undertook when it joined the OSCE in 1992.

Nothing has changed for the better since last October's fundamentally flawed parliamentary elections and rigged referendum allowing Lukashenka unlimited terms as president. In November, Lukashenka appointed Viktor Sheiman as head of the powerful Presidential Administration, despite credible evidence linking Sheiman to the disappearances of opposition leaders and a journalist in 1999 and 2000.

The harassment and persecution of civil society has intensified. A top opposition figure, Mikhail Marinich, was sentenced in late December on the charge of stealing, of all things, U.S. government property—in this case, computers—despite the fact that the U.S. Embassy in Minsk makes no claims against Marinich. Clearly, Lukashenka wants to eliminate Marinich as a potential candidate for the 2006 presidential elections.

Other opposition leaders—Valery Levaneuski and Alyaksandr Vasilyeu—

continue to serve terms in a minimum security colony after having been found guilty of "public slander" of the Belarusian leader. Their crime? Distributing leaflets urging people to take part in an unauthorized rally. The leaflets contained a satirical poem about Lukashenka. Another example of Belarus' reluctance to promote human rights is the recent refusal to grant a visa to former OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Chairman and Romanian Foreign Minister Adrian Severin, who now serves as the UN Human Rights Commission's Special Rapporteur on Belarus. The Belarusian regime has also clamped down on independent NGOs and prodemocracy political parties with Kafkaesque legal requirements and has mounted a full-fledged assault on independent trade unions. Problems are being experienced by religious communities attempting to operate freely.

As Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, charged with monitoring and encouraging compliance by all 55 participating States with OSCE agreements, I call upon the Belarusian authorities to live up to their freely-undertaken commitments with respect to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Last October, President Bush signed into law the Belarus Democracy Act, which had been introduced in the Senate by then Helsinki Commission Chairman Senator Campbell and in the House by commission co-chair CHRIS SMITH, stating:

We welcome this legislation as a means to bolster friends of freedom and to nurture the growth of democratic values, habits, and institutions within Belarus. The fate of Belarus will rest not with a dictator, but with the students, trade unionists, civic and religious leaders, journalists, and all citizens of Belarus claiming freedom for their nation.

It is essential that we in the Congress, together with the administration and the OSCE, keep faith with the courageous people of Belarus struggling to ensure freedom and democratic values for their long-suffering country.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

MS. NICOLE WAYANT AND MR. CORMAC O'CONNOR

• Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I congratulate and honor two young Kansas students who have achieved national recognition for exemplary volunteer service in their communities. Nicole Wayant of Topeka, KS, and Cormac O'Connor of Prairie Village, KS, have just been named State Honorees in The 2005 Prudential Spirit of Community Awards program, an annual honor conferred on only one high school student and one middle-level student in each State, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Ms. Wayant is being recognized for creating a youth health council to promote the benefits of an active, healthy lifestyle among the students in her school district.

Mr. O'Connor is being recognized for implementing an intergenerational arts program that brought senior citizens and at-risk children together for classes in visual arts, movements, theater and jazz.

In light of numerous statistics that indicate Americans today are less involved in their communities than they once were, it's vital that we encourage and support the kind of selfless contributions these young people have made. People of all ages need to think more about how we, as individual citizens, can work together at the local level to ensure the health and vitality of our towns and neighborhoods. Young volunteers like Ms. Wayant and Mr. O'Connor are inspiring examples to all of us, and are among our brightest hopes for a better tomorrow.

The program that brought these young role models to our attention—The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards—was created by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1995 to impress upon all youth volunteers that their contributions are critically important and highly valued, and to inspire other young people to follow their example. Over the past 10 years, the program has become the Nation's largest youth recognition effort based solely on unity service, with more than 170,000 young people participating since its inception.

Ms. Wayant and Mr. O'Connor should be extremely proud to have been singled out from such a large group of dedicated volunteers. As part of their recognition, they will come to Washington in early May, along with other 2005 Spirit of Community honorees from across the country, for several days of special events, including a Congressional breakfast on Capitol Hill. While here in Washington, ten will be named America's top youth volunteers of the year by a distinguished national selection committee.

I applaud Ms. Wayant and Mr. O'Connor for their initiative in seeking to make their communities better places to live, and for the positive impact they have had on the lives of others. I also salute the other young people in my State who were named Distinguished Finalists by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards for their outstanding volunteer service. They are Shawn Bryant of Leavenworth, KS, Brad Harris of Saint Paul, KS, Amanda Knox of Clifton, KS, and Creighton Olsen of Larned, KS.

All of these young people have demonstrated a level of commitment and accomplishment that is truly extraordinary in today's world and they deserve our sincere admiration and respect. Their actions show that young Americans can—and do—play important roles in their communities, and